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ABSTRACT

An outgrowth of the New York City Annual Storytelling Festival, this handbook presents a framework upon which to build a storytelling program for children. The handbook is intended to prompt additional exploration of the literature on storytelling and folklore and help start storytelling programs, contests, and festivals in schools. The handbook includes the following sections: (1) "Storytelling: The Library Connection"; (2) "Before the Contest"; (3) "Organizing a Storytelling Contest in Your School"; (4) "Launching the School Contest"; (5) "Criteria for Judging the Storytelling Contest"; (6) "Publicity and Promotion"; (7) "Teaching about Folk Literature"; (8) "Choosing a Story for Telling"; (9) "Storytelling Contest Guidelines"; and (10) "Storytelling Techniques." Seventy-five references are appended. (MS)

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COME SPIN A YARN

The Storytelling Handbook

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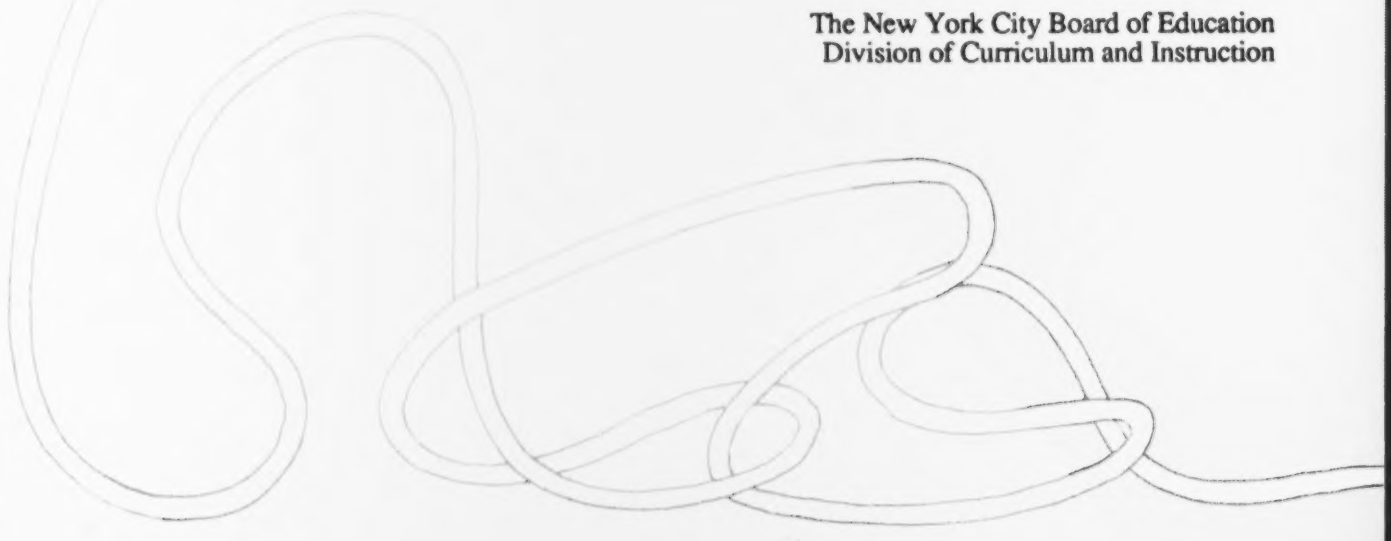

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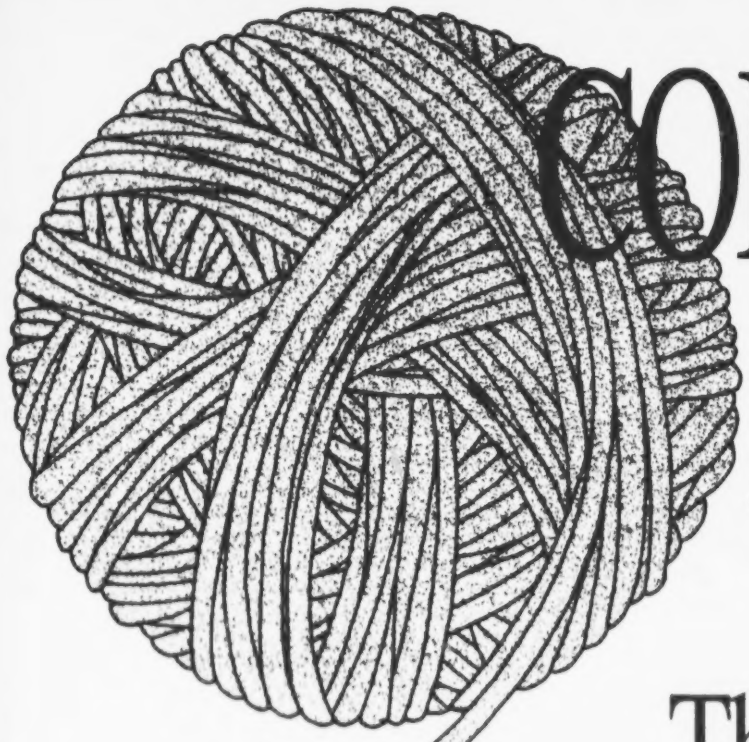

COME SPIN A YARN

The Storytelling Handbook

The New York City Board of Education
Division of Curriculum and Instruction

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Dedication

This manual is dedicated to

Lucille C. Thomas

former Assistant Director of Library Services

and

Founder of the New York City Annual Storytelling Festival

whose love of the art of storytelling
and concern for the children of our schools
continue to nurture the program even after her retirement.

Table of Contents

Preface IX

Introduction 1

Storytelling: The Library Connection 3

Before the Contest 7

Organizing a Storytelling Contest in Your School 9

Launching the School Contest 15

Criteria for Judging the Storytelling Contest 17

Publicity and Promotion 19

Teaching about Folk Literature 23

Choosing a Story for Telling 25

Storytelling Contest Guidelines 25

Storytelling Techniques 27

Bibliography 31

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Foreword

The art of telling stories is as old as humankind and as new as the latest joke. The New York City Annual Storytelling Festival was created and nurtured by the New York City schools to celebrate this art, and encourage the love and exploration of the vast literature of folktale, legend and myth. Since it began 10 years ago, it has grown from a program for elementary schools alone, to one including intermediate, junior high and high schools.

The New York City Annual Storytelling Festival is the culmination of a team effort in our schools. It requires children who are eager to participate in a contest that demands the perfection of many skills. It also requires teachers, librarians and administrators who are willing to contribute their time, effort and expertise to teach folk literature, coach storytellers, and coordinate the programs in their schools and districts.

In return for these efforts, our student storytellers learn how to memorize, project and be at ease before an audience; explore their own cultural heritage and the beliefs and values of other ethnic groups; recognize the technical elements of stories such as plot, character and theme; broaden their knowledge of literature; and, become loyal and supportive library users and helpers.

This handbook has been prepared both as a guide for staff members new to the storytelling program and as a refresher for those more experienced. The school library is the link connecting the child with the folktale. Because storytelling is an important component of the library media program, school and district librarians should act as coordinators of the storytelling contests.

Lewis Carroll has called stories "love gifts," and storytelling is an art that gives much to all who would perpetuate it: understanding, awareness, imagination and pleasure. These gifts are yours to give.

Charlotte Frank, Executive Director
Division of Curriculum and Instruction

Preface

After ten years of growing popularity within New York City's elementary and junior high schools, it is not surprising that the New York City Annual Storytelling Festival continues to expand. Started as a program for elementary school children in Brooklyn's Community School District 16, the storytelling program and festival grew into a citywide event. It eventually expanded into intermediate and junior high schools, and 1987 marked its expansion into high schools.

The educational benefits of storytelling contests are many and depend upon how much time, effort and emphasis are provided. Children are given exposure to folk literature. They are taught how to select a story, and then how to understand, memorize and tell it effectively.

Children become willing and enthusiastic participants as a result of a well-planned and well-executed storytelling program in the school. Participation enhances their understanding of folk literature, improves their oral skills and memorization, reinforces their self-confidence, expands their imaginations and broadens their understanding of our literary heritage.

McDonald's has generously made this handbook available to New York City school librarians and teachers and participating school systems outside of the city.

The purpose of this handbook is to present an easy-to-follow framework upon which to build a storytelling program for children, based upon one that has worked successfully over a number of years. The advice offered here draws upon the experience of school librarians and supervisors, as well as the printed advice of master storytellers whose works are listed in the bibliography.

The reading of this handbook should prompt additional exploration of the literature on storytelling and folklore. The hope is that this guide will help start storytelling programs, contests and festivals in many more schools and that these programs will prove to be as successful, and as rewarding, as the New York City Annual Storytelling Festival has been to its participants and its supporters.

Geraldine Clark, Director
School Library Services
New York City Board of Education

Acknowledgments

Come Spin a Yarn is a project of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Charlotte Frank, Executive Director, and Pearl M. Warner, Deputy Executive Director.

The School Library Services Unit, under the direction of Geraldine Clark, has prepared this handbook for all who are thinking of providing storytelling programs in their schools and all those who already have existing storytelling programs. The handbook was compiled and written by Claire Rudin, Coordinator of School Library Services and Storytelling Coordinator, with the goal of conveying the magic of storytelling to all who read it.

Special thanks go to Suzanne Burach, Naomi Feller, Lenore Rosenthal and Mercedes Rowe, who took time from their busy schedules to prepare various sections of this publication, and Marilyn Berg Iarusso, who wrote so eloquently about library storytelling.

The sponsors of the festival, whose monetary and other contributions have added so much to its success, are:

McDonald's, whose sponsorship enabled us to provide this handbook
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The New York Daily News
The New York Post
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Silver Burdett Co.
World Book Encyclopedia Co.

Lucille Thomas, who wrote the introduction to this handbook, conceived the idea of the New York City Annual Storytelling Festival and has worked tirelessly to advance it. This handbook is dedicated to her in the name of all the children who have been enriched by their participation in the storytelling festival.

The manuscript was prepared for publication by the Editorial Production Unit, under the direction of Alaire Mitchell, Assistant Director of Curriculum Research and Project Coordinator; Maureen Maguire, Production Coordinator; Sarah Corbin, Copy Chief.

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Introduction

"Storytelling is the presentation of literature through the spoken voice . . ."

- Ruth Sawyer

Recognizing the need to stimulate greater interest in literature and to improve communication skills, Lucille Thomas launched a program in Community School District 16, New York City Board of Education, focusing on storytelling for and by children.

The model designed for the Storytelling Program required the school library media specialists to demonstrate the art of storytelling for the children. To further develop their skills, outstanding storytellers were invited to conduct a series of workshops in the district.

When Lucille Thomas was appointed Assistant Director of Library Services, her attention turned to expanding the storytelling program and festival to include the 32 community school districts. During the first year 31 districts participated.

To ensure the participation of large numbers of students, the organizational structure included grades 3-8. Library media specialists or teachers assigned to the library and library coordinators/supervisors coordinated the programs on the school and district levels, respectively. Each child in grades 3-8 was encouraged to participate, and the program ended with a contest.

The foundation for the program has always been a unit on storytelling, beginning in each classroom and library/media center with the teacher and the library media specialist presenting storytelling as an art form. After introducing stories representing our literary heritage and cultures of other lands, the teachers and library staff encourage each child to memorize a story.

The competition began in classes and libraries and progressed to schoolwide, district, borough and citywide contests for Level I (third and fourth grades), Level II (fifth and sixth grades), and, Level III (seventh and eighth grades).

The judges included public librarians, who are expert storytellers.

The guidelines required that the students restrict their selection to folktales, encompassing fairy tales, legends, fables and myths--all written in English. Each participant memorized a story and told it in the traditional mode, without props or dramatization.

For youngsters, there are many academic virtues in storytelling. Five goals for the storytelling activity were established:

1. to improve the student's ability to read
2. to foster creative language growth
3. to heighten an appreciation of literature
4. to stimulate the imagination
5. to expand the student's knowledge of other cultures, times and experiences

The finale for the program was the New York City Annual Storytelling Festival, which featured the winners from the five boroughs. Each participant received a trophy topped by the "Lamp of Learning." Publishers and organizations, such as the Hans Christian Andersen Storytelling Center, contributed books, bonds and certificates.

The students who have participated in the program have developed qualities of the creative artist: imagination, perception, insight, spontaneity and concentration. In addition, they have become familiar with the vast reservoir of folk literature. The storytellers' horizons were widened, their points of view lengthened and their understanding deepened.

Parents of the storytellers take great pride in assisting and encouraging their youngsters as they gain confidence and competence as storytellers. They attend the programs with pleasure in the storytellers' accomplishments.

Comments and letters attest to the value of the program:

A student:
"This taught me that I really could make something out of myself and out of the talent I have."

A school principal:
" . . . This was one of the most pleasurable and significant educational activities I have had the pleasure to supervise in many years."

A parent:
"The storytelling contest was a surprise package from a child to his or her parent . . . It gave my daughter a chance to discover and develop a new talent. She learned courage and confidence to speak in front of an audience of hundreds of all ages and professions."

The New York City Annual Storytelling Festival has served as a model for school districts in other parts of the state and country. Some public library systems have adapted the program as well.

The storytellers share their stories in schools, public libraries and nursing and senior citizens' homes, and the three public library systems invite the winners to appear as guest storytellers. Some of the top winners have told stories at the Hans Christian Andersen Statue in Central Park and on the "Today Show."

Storytelling: The Library Connection

Children naturally love stories. If they are successful in acquiring reading skills they can continue to enjoy a wealth of stories all of their lives. Other children reach a mysterious and tragic moment when the gate closes. They are cut off from written stories by their inability to read fluently. The written word dies for the children without skills.

Reading aloud and storytelling are two ways to keep the gates open and the stories alive. Reading aloud is a wonderful gift for children of all ages. Skillful oral interpretation can bring pleasure to the most able reader and can show children who are less proficient that a rare prize awaits them if they persevere.

Storytelling is even more magical than reading aloud. It is as old as human experience. It has always stimulated us to recall the past, explore mysteries, search for explanations, celebrate human nature and experience joy and companionship. We should encourage all efforts to nurture the telling of stories, whether by teachers, librarians, or by children themselves.

Our world is fast-paced, competitive, often confusing, and filled with brash images, abrasive sounds and awesome technology. We find little time to truly connect with others, even in our own families. Listening to someone use the power of language and the keenness of the human mind to unlock mysteries with words and share them with us can be a revelation.

In successful storytelling, the teller and listener join together in a wondrous way to experience and appreciate the events, personalities and meaning in a story. Barriers dissolve and a uniquely human communication is achieved, refreshing and reconnecting us with one another. This experience can enrich life and humanize education.

Exploring folklore from the many cultures throughout the world makes us realize that the similarities between our seemingly diverse cultures are greater than the differences, and so more barriers come tumbling down.

Because storytelling can so powerfully engage the mind and emotions, it has a rare ability to involve and awaken us on more levels than we ever reach when we are occupying ourselves with films, television or even everyday conversation.

As we listen to a storyteller, we sometimes feel startling moments when something important and almost forgotten stirs in our memory. We may want to hold that moment and examine it because we realize it speaks to us. Even if the moment slips away back into the story, it often leaves behind a sense of peace and comfort.

The stories that little children love may seem obvious and trivial to adults. Children find them charming and delightful because the tales touch on some secret understanding they have about life. The way they tell them, with pleasure and pride, displays this. As children grow older they may select stories that are more abstract and symbolic as their favorites. Adults will naturally have more ability to appreciate the more sophisticated stories. However, a seemingly simple story should never be dismissed as trivial. There is power in simple stories, too. The right story at the right time at any age can bring about important insights, awaken an appreciation of the power and beauty of words and ideas, alleviate pain and isolation, and give meaning and direction to life.

It is this belief in the healing power of stories and their ability to awaken and nourish the human spirit that led librarians to take up storytelling. Although the date of the first library story hour is unknown, it was about 1900 when children's libraries were becoming established in public libraries across the country. Anne Carroll Moore, who later became the first supervisor of children's work at The New York Public Library, had held storytelling programs in the children's room of the Pratt Institute Free Library in Brooklyn as early as 1896. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh had experimented with storytelling by 1899, and the success of the program led it to become a regular part of librarians' work with children. Buffalo Public Library started storytelling programs in 1898 as a way to interest children in books and reading. In an effort to introduce literature without being didactic, children's services librarians turned increasingly to storytelling.

In 1900, a gifted professional storyteller, Marie Shedlock, came to the United States to lecture on Hans Christian Andersen and to tell fairy tales to children and adults. She had already spent ten years as a storyteller in England and France.

Shedlock was first seen by Mary Wright Plummer, director of the School of Library Science at Pratt Institute, as she told stories in French and English at Sherry's, a fashionable New York restaurant. Plummer was impressed and invited Shedlock to tell stories to the trustees and faculty at Pratt. Here, Anne Carroll Moore, the children's librarian, heard her and was enchanted by her natural but flawless style of expression. Moore became convinced that a children's library should have a regular story hour.

Shedlock toured the country, telling stories, lecturing, conducting training programs for storytellers, and inspiring librarians to believe that storytelling was worthy of being considered a true art. Shedlock's book of lectures to teachers, The Art of the Storyteller, is still considered a classic.

Other outstanding storytellers were influential in library storytelling. Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen told stories for the Chicago Public Library and lectured at such schools as Western Reserve Library School and the Carnegie Library School of Pittsburgh. Later she became a recording artist for the Library of Congress and for the Victor Company, and she published collections of Norwegian folklore.

Anne Carroll Moore looked hard and long for a talented storyteller to join her in her new job at The New York Public Library. In 1907 she found Anna Cogswell Tyler and appointed her to establish a storytelling program. Tyler, who had had dramatic training, embarked upon a program of careful supervision of storytellers in their selection and presentation of tales. She guided them in their reading and encouraged them to tell the versions of stories that would best captivate children and inspire them to a wider range in reading, which she saw as the proper function of a library story hour. Tyler was influential in the library profession and held workshops for many organizations, including the Playground Association of America and the New York City Board of Education. In 1921, she published a collection of her favorite stories, Twenty-Four Unusual Stories.

Mary Gould Davis succeeded Tyler at The New York Public Library in 1922. She introduced the "wishing candle," fresh flowers and a formal and dignified tone to the story hour. She was remembered by her colleagues as a storyteller of remarkable gifts, with perfect timing and controlled gestures. Davis traveled widely and collected and published folktales in books such as Three Golden Oranges and Other Spanish Folktales. She wrote many articles, edited the new editions of the Andrew Lang "color" fairytales books and taught at Columbia University School of Library Science. Her philosophy of storytelling spread across the country.

Another great library storyteller was Ruth Sawyer, who shared her feelings about the art in the inspirational book, The Way of the Storyteller. Her Irish nurse gave her the love of folklore. She collected tales in Ireland, Spain and Cuba and published many books. She was inspired to tell stories by Marie Shedlock and conducted her first story hour at Christmas in 1910 at a branch of the New York Public Library where she told "The Voyage of the Wee Red Cap." It became one of her best-known stories. During her life, Sawyer was showered with awards, including the Newbery Medal in 1937 for Roller Skates, the Regina Medal in 1965 for a "lifetime of distinguished contribution to children's literature," and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award the same year for books that had "made a substantial and lasting contribution to literature for children."

Other more recent library storytellers of distinction in the Northeast include Frances Clarke Sayers, Spencer Shaw, Mary Strang, Maria Cimino, Pura Belpre and Augusta Baker, who, upon her retirement as Coordinator of Children's Services at the New York Public Library, was named Storyteller-in-Residence at the University of South Carolina. Outstanding younger storytellers who are well-known today and whose work grows out of the library tradition include Margaret Kimmel of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh; Carol Birch, a Connecticut storyteller and producer of storytelling records; Jackie Torrence of North Carolina, who tells Black folktales; and, Barbara Freeman and Connie Regan-Blake, who have traveled internationally as the storytelling team "The Folktellers," and who began their careers in a library in North Carolina.

Storytelling organizations and festivals are thriving all over the country. New York City has the New York City Storytelling Center and the Jewish Storytelling Center. Storytelling events are being held frequently all over the state. A storytelling renaissance is clearly under way.

Thoughtful and gifted storytellers from many other disciplines, including psychologists, ministers and performing artists, are enriching the art of storytelling through their contributions. They realize that storytelling is a gift to the teller as well as to the listener.

Marilyn Iarusso

Marilyn Berg Iarusso
Storytelling Specialist
The New York Public Library

Before the Contest

Read the guidelines thoroughly. (See page 25.)

Create a schedule for:

meeting with classes to introduce the contest;

class and/or individual student visits to the library;

teaching about folk literature;

class contests; and,

a school contest.

Check the folklore and mythology sections of the library. There should be a wide variety of collections and individual tales, with a wide range of reading levels, and ethnic and national groups represented. Order materials to fill gaps.

Some librarians recommend developing a file of folktales that are popular with student storytellers, and/or worthy of learning for storytelling. As you find stories in anthologies and other appropriate and authenticated sources, photocopy them for your file. These duplicated stories supplement the school library collections, and they may be presented to students as additional sources for story selection.

Learn a folktale and practice telling it. Use it to motivate and encourage student storytellers. At the very least, select some good stories for reading to classes, and know them well enough so that you can read them aloud and still maintain audience/eye contact.

Prepare a teaching unit on folk literature and storytelling. See New York State Education Department's The Elementary Library Media Skills Curriculum; Grades K-6, or Storytelling: Art and Technique by Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene, for ideas.

At the secondary level, you might discuss teaching plans with the language arts teacher(s). You may collaborate in developing and teaching the unit, do it yourself, or inspire the language arts teacher(s) to teach it. Make sure, however, that your input helps determine the content of the unit, selection of stories and storytellers.

Meet with school administrators and staff to organize a storytelling contest in your school.

Organizing a Storytelling Contest in Your School

Begin with a conference.

Meet with the principal and/or your immediate supervisor, and/or the Communication Arts chairperson, enlisting their cooperation.

Determine the dates of the storytelling contest in the school, working back from the district and borough semifinal dates that have already been established.

Discuss the goals of the New York City Annual Storytelling Festival and decide which should be emphasized in the school:

Improving students' reading ability;

Fostering creative language growth;

Heightening students' appreciation of literature;

Stimulating the students' imaginations;

Expanding the students' knowledge of other cultures, times and experiences;

Providing broad exposure to well-written material; and,

Satisfying students' needs for self-expression.

Decide the best ways of attaining maximum pupil participation. Explore ways of integrating the storytelling contest with the Communication Arts curriculum, e.g., study of folk literature, opportunities for improving oral expression, or analysis of story elements and structure.

Will pupil participation be voluntary or based on recommendations of staff members and/or peers?

Or, will teachers sponsor a storytelling contest within each class, requiring students to read an authentic folktale, myth or legend, and then learn and tell the story to the class? A class representative may then be chosen by the students on the basis of the "Criteria for Judging the Storytelling Contest." (See page 17.)

Confer with P.T.A.

Announce the date and time of the storytelling contest in the school.

Invite officers of the P.T.A. to serve as judges.

Ask the P.T.A. to supply funds for awards and certificates.

Discuss the contest with the President of the G.O., Arista chairperson and their faculty advisers.

Ask for their cooperation in publicizing the event and securing prizes.

Invite them to serve as judges for the schoolwide storytelling contest.

Meet with the librarian from your local public library.

Alert him/her about the contest.

Provide a copy of the contest guidelines to help students select stories or books in the public library.

Meet with Communication Arts teachers.

Describe the contest and solicit their cooperation.

Distribute copies of contest rules and criteria for evaluating contestants.

Describe your role as coordinator and what help you will need from them.

Secure pupil participation.

Visit each Communication Arts class in secondary schools and each appropriate classroom in elementary schools.

TELL A STORY.

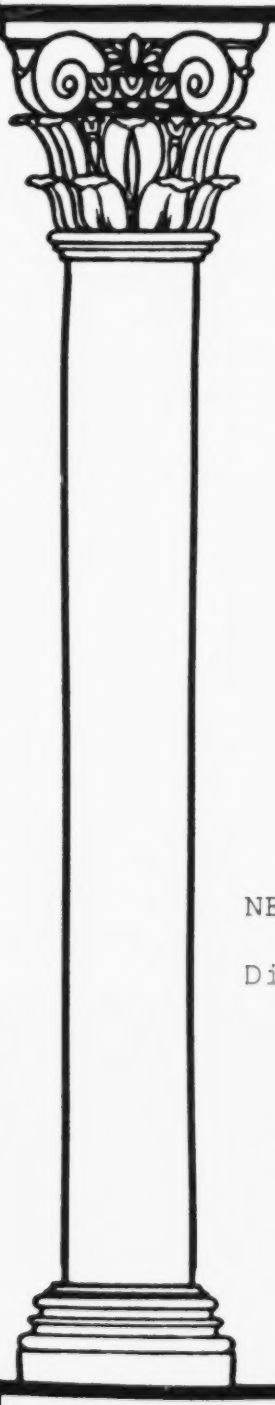
Describe public and media interest in storytelling and awards for participation. The quality of student participation will reflect your own enthusiasm.

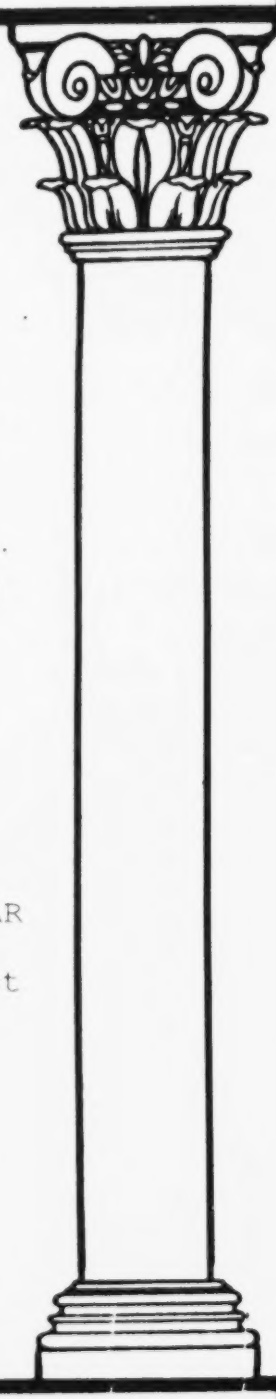
Announce the arrival of the storytelling contest, dates of student eliminations, and purpose/goals of the contest.

Request teacher recommendations if the contest is to be entered on an individual basis.

Distribute a handout describing the contest and inviting student participation. (Sample follows).

NEW UTRECHT HIGH SCHOOL





ALL NINTH GRADE STUDENTS
ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE

ANNUAL CITYWIDE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

WHERE? **SCHOOL LIBRARY**

WHEN? **FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 1987**

WHY?

1. To develop an appreciation of your cultural heritage as well as those of your classmates.

2. To satisfy your need for self expression through the art of storytelling.

3. To develop qualities of the creative artist: imagination, spontaneity, enthusiasm, insight, etc.

NEW UTRECHT'S STORYTELLER OF THE YEAR
will participate in the
District/Borough Storytelling Contest

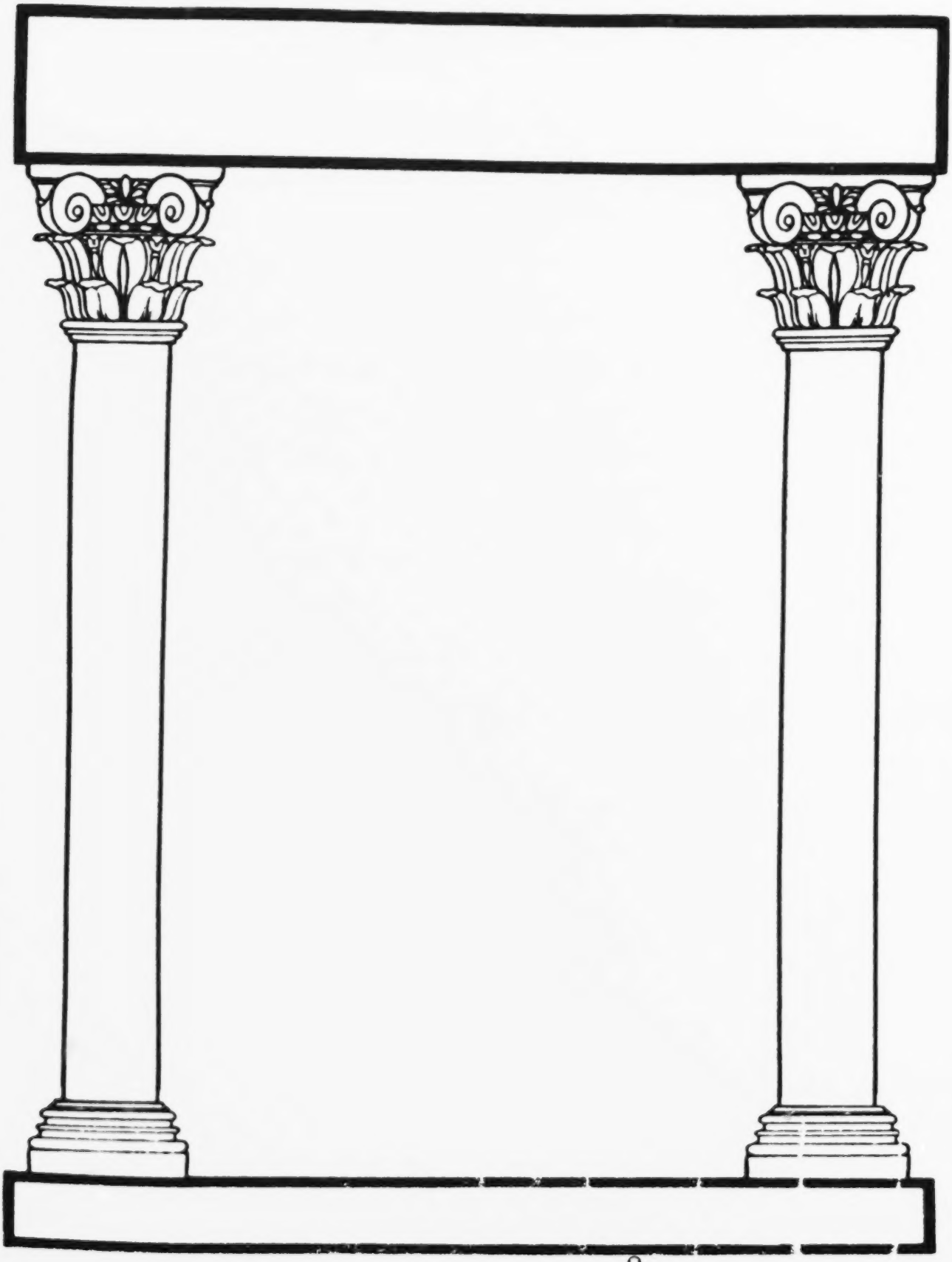
Prizes and/or awards will be presented to all particpants.

An award of $25.00 will be given to each borough finalist.

An award of a $100 bond will be given to the citywide winners.

RETURN THE ENCLOSED APPLICATION TO MRS. BURACH, LIBRARIAN
NO LATER THAN WEDNESDAY, FEB. 4TH, 1987

Sample Blank Flyer



Get Students Started.

Select and display your best books of folk literature in preparation for student selection.

Conduct a general meeting in the library.

Meet with all contestants who have volunteered to participate in the storytelling festival.

Announce a deadline for learning the story.

Show a videotape of past citywide winners.

Discuss story selection, with particular emphasis on the importance of liking the story.

Allow ample time for book selection by students. Some librarians photocopy the stories that students select from anthologies so that the book can continue to circulate.

Set a date for each student to return to the library to read/tell his/her tale: approximately one week later.

Review the guidelines and techniques for presenting the story for the contest.

Prepare a time schedule: date for story to be memorized, preparation time with librarian, date for school contest. A sample Coaching Schedule form follows:

COACHING SCHEDULE

NAME_____ CLASS_____

Period	Class	Room
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		

Please note the day and hours available for after-school coaching in preparation for the Storytelling Contest.

_____

_____

Launching the School Contest

Judges

Request participation from chairpersons and assistant principals, members of the P.T.A., G.O. president, Arista chairperson, librarians from local public libraries, teachers and community leaders.

Arrange a meeting to discuss guidelines and distribute the "Criteria for Judging the Storytelling Contest." (See page xx.)

Announce dates and times for contest to be held in the school library.

Audience

Invite one or more classes to the school contest in the library.

Invite the parents of the contestants.

Invite members of the administration.

Invite P.T.A. officers and members.

Other Preparations

Arrange furniture appropriately and provide festive decorations. If possible, provide refreshments as well.

Make name-tags for contestants.

Duplicate enough "Criteria for Judging the Storytelling Contest" forms for each storyteller. Storyteller names should be entered on forms beforehand.

Prizes and Awards

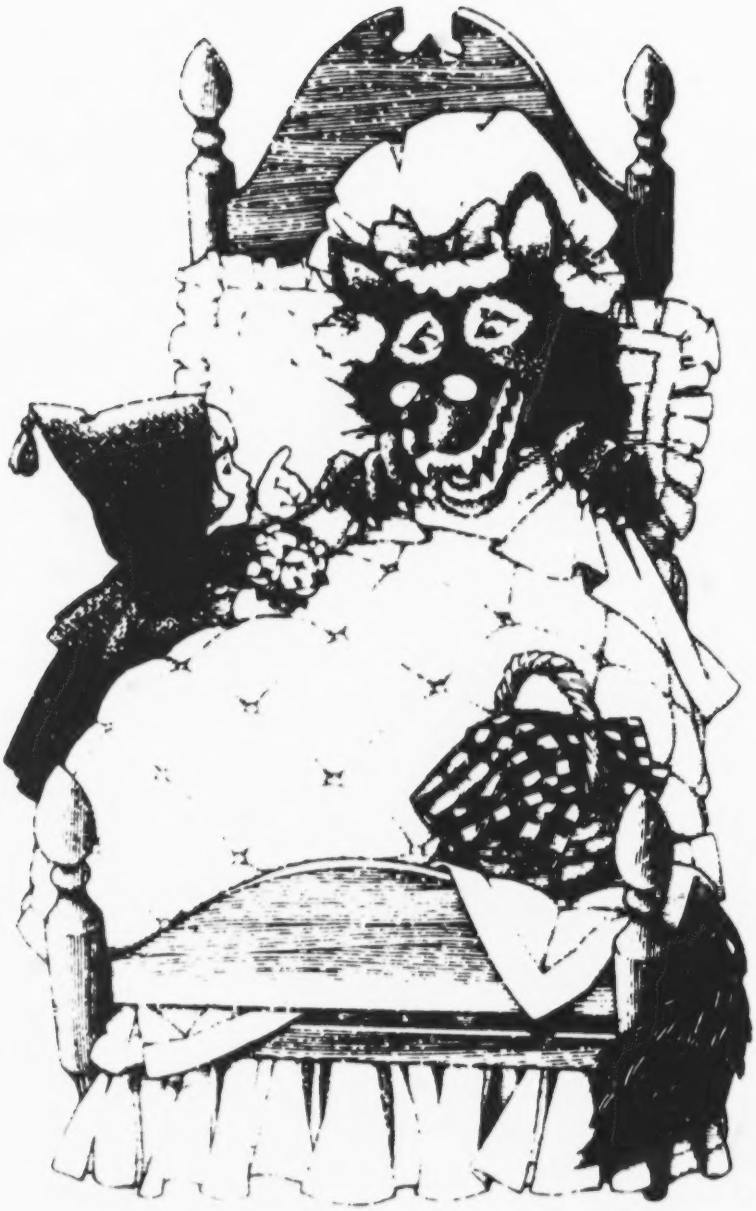
Each contestant should receive a certificate for participation.

Trophies or other prizes should be presented to first-, second- and third-place winners.

Follow-up Activities

Arrange assembly programs with administration, with a minimum of two periods to be allotted for school winners to tell their stories.

Set aside sufficient time for the first-place winner to practice telling her/his story to the librarian, and provide coaching time for preparation for the district/borough elimination.



Criteria for Judging the Storytelling Contest

TENTH ANNUAL CITYWIDE STORYTELLING CONTEST

1. Each item on the scale will be rated from 1-5 points with 5 representing the highest level of skill. Maximum 40 points.

2. The storyteller is required to memorize the story.

3. The storyteller will not be allowed to use props.

4. The storyteller may not dramatize the story.

POINTS

___1. Enunciation and Pronunciation
Does the storyteller pronounce the words correctly and clearly?

___2. Voice Control
Is voice quality appealing and unaffected? Is the voice natural and appropriate to the story?

___3. Pacing
Does the storyteller tell the story at a pace that is comfortable and appropriate to the story?

___4. Poise
Does the storyteller appear relaxed? Does he/she avoid sounding mechanical or using distracting mannerisms?

___5. Audience Contact
Does the storyteller look at and involve the audience? Is eye-to-eye contact maintained?

___6. Memorization
Does the storyteller know the story by heart and tell it as written?

___7. Story Selection
Is the story appropriate and challenging for the age and level of the storyteller? Is it a good story for telling?

___8. Overall Presentation

Student's Name_____ Total Points_____

Grade_____ School_____

District_____ Date_____

Judge_____

Publicity and Promotion

The following are suggested means of publicizing the storytelling contest, both within and outside the school.

Submit articles for publication in the school, PTA and community newspapers. Mention names of storytellers who will be participating, describe the event, and provide some background material. Another news release should follow the contest, giving names of winners, the stories they told, including appropriate anecdotes or descriptions, and the school where it was held. (See news release form on page 21.)

Ask art teachers to have their classes prepare posters. Display them in the library, in halls, classrooms, lunch room, school office and auditorium. Arrange to display them outside the school as well, in supermarkets, banks, stores and other public places.

Take pictures before and during the contest, and keep a scrapbook.

Videotaping may precede or follow the contest, but can distract and fluster the storytellers during the event.

Follow the contest with non-competitive storytelling programs. Arrange for participants to tell their stories in the lower grades and in classes that did not participate.

Additional awards may be presented to participants at the PTA meeting immediately following the contest. Try to make storytelling part of the agenda, and encourage your most confident storytellers to tell their stories at the meeting.

This will improve library visibility, increase attendance for the PTA, foster parental pride, lend importance to the activity, increase participants' self-esteem, and pave the way for greater success next year.

Arrange visits to senior citizens' centers or homes, where your storytellers will be warmly welcomed. Day care centers, children's wards and community centers or a local Y are additional potential storytelling sites.

News Release Form

MEDIA ALERT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE DATE _____

FROM: (ABC SCHOOL)

TO: (Newspaper Name) UPCOMING EVENT: _____

ATTENTION: (City Editor and/or Feature Editor)

DATE: _____ TIME: _____ PLACE: _____

_____

DESCRIPTION OF EVENT

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

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_____

CONTACT: (Your Name) TELEPHONE: _____

SUBMITTED BY: (Your Name) DATE: _____

cc: (Principal's Name)

Teaching about Folk Literature

The content of an instructional unit will depend upon the class' age and ability, the time to be devoted to it, and the results you wish to achieve.

Some Suggested Approaches

Provide an overview of folk literature. Define and distinguish among fairy tales, legends, tall tales, epics and hero tales. Tell and read selections from each. Discuss superstitions, festivals, rituals and games and relate them to folktales.

Introduce different kinds of folktales with a book talk and encourage children to read several tales which can then be discussed.

Explore the folk literature of a particular country or ethnic group, and relate it to visual arts, music, folk arts, ballet (e.g., Nutcracker), opera (e.g., Cinderella), and theater (e.g., compare the folktale "Pyramus and Thisbe" with Romeo and Juliet).

Study a particular kind of folk literature, such as American tall tales or hero tales such as King Arthur, Charlemagne and Roland, or myths of Greece, the Norse people and Rome.

Compare older tales with more modern variants. For example, the English Jack stories were the antecedents of The Jack Tales, American versions compiled by Richard Chase. Spider stories hark back to African and East Indian tales.

Focus on a single tale and its variations in other ethnic or language groups. Examples are:

- Stone Soup, Nail Soup, Soup Stone and The Old Woman and the Tramp;
- Cinderella, Cinder-Maid, Cap O'Rushes, Ashenputtel, Cenerentola, Cat-Skin and Rushen Coatie; or,
- Rumpelstiltskin, Tom Tit Tot, Duffy and the Devil and Whuppity Stourie

Focus on folktale types such as trickster tales, animal tales, "pourquoi" stories, noodlehead stories, wizards and witches, giants and trolls, romances and magic tales.

Suggested Activities

Discuss with students: plot, atmosphere, characterization, setting and mood of some stories. How are these suggested by the written word? How can they be suggested by an oral presentation of the story? Younger students, particularly, will enjoy drawing or painting a character or setting suggested by the story.

Have students investigate family stories. They may interview older family members and either tape or write down stories that are told to them.

After students read several stories of a particular culture, have them enumerate some of the particular beliefs and value systems of that culture that are revealed by the story.

Use a folk literature unit to reinforce or introduce dictionary and research skills. Students can make a glossary of words and place names using language and geographical dictionaries. They can learn how to use indexes such as Eastman's Index to Fairy Tales, Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, as well as general encyclopedia indexes to find out about mythological characters and historical occurrences that form the basis of such tales as The Iliad and The Odyssey, The Song of Roland and Robin Hood.

Compare legendary heroes with contemporary super-heroes such as Superman, Conan and Rambo. Explore the values that are implicit in these modern stories.

Investigate the origin and use today of mythological symbols such as the caduceus, Pegasus, the Gorgon's head and the signs of the zodiac.

Investigate ideas and theories related to numbers such as three wishes, five musicians, seven dwarfs.

Explore the ways a study of folk literature can relate to various subjects with subject area teachers: Social Studies (folk literature as it relates to Ancient History and American History), Art (mythology in Renaissance Art), Music (Swan Lake, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella), Literature (folk literature as a source and inspiration for poetry, novels, plays).

Choosing a Story for Telling

Story selection is itself an art. Certainly it is a most important factor in successful participation in a storytelling contest. In helping children select their stories, you will want to emphasize the following:

- Know the contest rules and recommendations about the story to be told: length of telling time, type of story, recommended sources and/or authors.
- Look at several stories before choosing one.
- Make sure you like the story and enjoy telling it.

Although the storytelling contest is restricted to authentic folk literature, there still remain literally thousands of acceptable tales from which to choose.

Verification of the story's acceptability in accordance with the Storytelling Contest Guidelines is the responsibility of the school coordinator and is to be reviewed by the district coordinator.

The following describes in detail how to determine the acceptability of a story:

Storytelling Contest Guidelines

Selection of Story

The story selected must be a folktale, and should be appropriate to the student's (1) age, (2) interest, and, (3) experience. "Folktale" is a comprehensive term which encompasses fairy tales, legends, fables and myths. Stories classified in the folk literature and/or mythology sections of a school or public library, (classification numbers 398, 398.2, 398.4 for folktales; 292, 293, 294, 299 for myths), are included in this group. Literary tales by Hans Christian Andersen, Eleanor Farjeon, Rudyard Kipling and Oscar Wilde are also acceptable. Stories outside of these categories must be verified in the following appropriate sources:

Eastman, Mary H. Index to Fairy Tales, Myths and Legends. Supplement 2. Westwood, MA: F.W. Faxon Co., Inc., 1952.

Ireland, Norma O. Index to Fairy Tales, 1949-1972, Including Folklore, Legends & Myths in Collections. Westwood, MA: F.W. Faxon Co. Inc., 1973.

McDonald, Margaret R. The Storyteller's Sourcebook: A Subject, Title and Motif Index to Folklore Collections for Children. New York: Neal-Schuman Pubs., Inc., 1982.

Choosing the Story

It is imperative that the storyteller like the story and enjoy telling it. The story should never be the teacher's choice unless the student likes it also.

The storyteller must know her/his own style in order to choose a suitable tale.

The story's length, vocabulary and complexity should match the storyteller's age, experience and ability.

The following are the elements of a good story for all ages:

- a single, well-constructed plot, clearly defined
- a good, catchy opening followed by immediate action
- one event in the story leading logically into the next
- suspense leading to the climax of the story

The storyteller should use the following guidelines to critique the many versions available:

- Look for vivid word pictures, pleasing sounds, rhythms, believable characters, dramatic action.
- Do not use stories with digressions from the main plot, subplots, flashbacks.
- Consider the sensibilities of the audience and the judges. Gratuitous violence and unpunished evil are examples of themes that may prove offensive and unsuitable for a captive audience.
- It is wise to stay with the traditional and time-tested story. Although contemporary folklore may fall within the guidelines, technically, it lacks the polishing effect of frequent retelling.

Pitfalls to Avoid

In order to avoid many common pitfalls, the storyteller must understand all the elements in the story and be comfortable with all the vocabulary in the story.

In addition, the storyteller should avoid:

- stories with dialects
- stories containing foreign phrases
- stories with an anti-climax
- stories that are too long or complicated. (These can cause difficulties in remembering, telling, and holding the attention of the audience. Five to eight minutes is an appropriate length.)

Storytelling Techniques

TEACHING AND COACHING STUDENT STORYTELLERS

Choosing a good story for telling is at least half of a successful storytelling performance. The storytelling coach should have a file of stories in readiness for matching student and story. Final choice is made after the student voices a preference.

Learning the Story

Have the student storyteller first read the story for enjoyment and then reread it concentrating on the story elements.

Discuss the plot, characters and setting with the storyteller.

Help the student analyze word pictures. Then, discuss mood, theme and ethnic or national background, if pertinent.

Assist the student in preparing and using memorization aids, such as outlining the plot, briefly describing the characters, scenes and setting.

Help the storyteller to determine what constitutes the story's special appeal and to recreate this mood or emotion.

Have the storyteller read the story aloud several times, learning the story as a whole rather than piece by piece. Younger children may need help in picking up the author's style and the rhythm of the prose.

Encourage and help the storyteller visualize and understand characters and scenes. Only by knowing what the characters are like will the storyteller be able to recreate them and convince the audience that he/she knows what the characters are thinking and how they are behaving. This is part of that all-important process by which the storyteller begins to "own" the story.

After the story has been memorized, encourage the student to tell it at every opportunity, to anyone who will listen--parents, other relatives, friends, pets, and to him/herself, aloud.

Preparing the Story

Expressive storytelling depends upon the student's understanding of the story's sequence of events, transitional passages and plot structure. From the beginning of the learning process, emphasize the importance of naturalness in telling the story--naturalness of voice, gesture and stance.

Further refinement of the storyteller's expressiveness involves such elements as:

- Timing: the rate at which parts of the story are narrated and characters speak. This should be appropriate to the mood and style of the story.

- Voice: use of pitch, articulation and voice texture in telling the story. Aim for a pleasant tone, but one that reflects the story's special qualities.

- Breathing: projecting from the diaphragm in order to sustain long passages and to reach all of the audience.

- Diction: enunciating the words clearly and pronouncing them correctly. Have a dictionary handy for checking the pronunciation of foreign or otherwise unfamiliar words.

Presenting the Story

"The goal of the teller is to make the story look, feel, and sound perfectly natural, told so simply and directly that it appears to be told from within." Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene in Storytelling: Art and Technique, R.R. Bowker Co., 1977.

Storytelling is not a dramatic performance, yet it is a special event. The storyteller should no more be required to stand stiffly, with hands at sides, than he or she should be required to reproduce the speech of fairy, troll or talking bear. Naturalness, simplicity, informality--these are the qualities to be emphasized. During the presentation, the storyteller should pay particular attention to his or her:

- Demeanor: The storyteller is on view from the time his or her name is announced until the time he or she is seated. The storyteller's walk, stance, movements, as well as storytelling techniques should be well-rehearsed.

- Eye Contact: The storyteller should look directly at his or her listeners and communicate with them.

- Gestures: Distracting gestures should be avoided.

- Facial Expression: The storyteller should convey all emotions through his or her voice, posture and facial expression, without excess dramatization.

When participating in the storytelling contest, the teller introduces him or herself, then the story, giving title and author, perhaps takes a step forward (as it were, stepping into the story), then begins the telling. At the end, the storyteller stops, pauses, then walks away after acknowledging applause.

The applause reflects the audience's appreciation of the storyteller's art as well as the quality of the story itself. When the three basic elements--the story, the teller, and the listener--have been brought together in a satisfying way, the storytelling experience is gratifying to all concerned. An audience will recognize and value a good story that is told with simple honesty.

In attempting to provide more than this--dramatic gestures, or exaggerated voice changes--the storyteller will succeed only in distracting the audience from the story, thereby diminishing the appeal to its imagination and emotions. This is why naturalness and restraint have been stressed. The storytelling program has been designed to appeal to average children, rather than those with marked dramatic talent.

The storytelling experience has brought many rewards--intangible but enduring--to all who have participated in it. Perhaps the greatest of these is the growth in self-confidence that storytellers gain from their success in accomplishing a difficult task. No less important, however, is the bond that develops between the storytellers and their librarian-coach, with its consequence of mutual loyalty and respect.

We hope you will find joy in this endeavor.

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